

## Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T ROME 6742

DIA FOR AA-2 AND DI-5

FOLLOWING MSG SENT ACTION SECSTATE MAY 16 BEING REPEATED YOU FOR  
INFO:

QTE S E C R E T ROME 6742

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: THE DIVORCE REFERENDUM IMPACT IN ITALY

1. THE RESULTS OF THE DIVORCE REFERENDUM IN ITALY, AND PARTICULARLY  
THE SURPRISING SPREAD BETWEEN THE WINNING PRO-DIVORCE VOTES AND

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THE LOSING ANTI-DIVORCE SIDE, WILL PRODUCE MANY EXPECTED AND

SOME UNEXPECTED CHANGES OF LASTING SIGNIFICANCE IN ITALY. IN ADDITION THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS ARE OF SUBSTANTIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE STRENGTH AND EFFICIENCY THE GOI WILL NEED TO FACE ITS CURRENT URGENT PROBLEMS. I AM PROVIDING WITH THIS MESSAGE MY CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE BROAD CONSENSUS OF MY CONTACTS AND THOSE OF MY STAFF, PENDING A MORE COMPLETE ANALYSIS BY AIRGRAM, NOW IN PREPARATION, AND AN ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT ITALIAN ECONOMIC STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE REFERENDUM.

2. PARTISAN POLITICAL EVALUATIONS OF THE REFERENDUM RESULTS HAVE BEEN QUICK TO DESCRIBE THE REFERENDUM AS A VICTORY FOR THE LEFT PARTIES AND A DEFEAT FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) AND THE NEO-FASCISTS (MSI). IT IS OF COURSE CONSIDERED A PERSONAL DEFEAT FOR FANFANI, WHO WAS THE PRINCIPAL AND OUTSPOKEN LEADER OF THE ANTI-DIVORCE FORCES AND WHOSE LEADERSHIP ROLE WITHIN THE DC IS NOW IN JEOPARDY BECAUSE OF THIS DEFEAT. THESE ASSESSMENTS ARE CORRECT. THE FOUR LARGEST ITALIAN PARTIES (DC, PCI, PSI AND MSI) LAID THEIR PRESTIGE ON THE LINE AND WON OR LOST ACCORDINGLY, IN IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS. BUT, ESPITE THE FACT THAT THE ELECTORATE DID NOT FOLLOW THE TRADITIONAL PARTY ALIGNMENTS WHICH HAVE REMAINED IMPRESSIVELY STABLE IN ORDINARY NATIONAL POLITICAL ELECTIONS, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THESE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL LOYALTIES HAVE CHANGED RADICALLY. INSTEAD, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE ITALIAN ELECTORATE OVERWHELMINGLY PREFERRED TO VOTE THE MERITS OF THE DIVORCE ISSUE.

3. I WISH PARTICULARLY TO FLAG THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REFUSAL OF THE ELECTORATE TO FOLLOW TRADITIONAL PARTY LOYALTIES, AND THEIR DETERMINATION INSTEAD TO VOTE THE MERITS OF THE ISSUE. IN THE LONG RUN THIS WILL FORCE THE DC, IF IT IS TO FLOURISH IN TODAY'S WORLD, TO MOVE THE FOCUS OF ITS ACTIVITIES TOWARD ITALY'S NEEDS AND THE ISSUES PERTINENT TO TODAY'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES. NEW FACES WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND. THOSE CHARACTERISTICS OF "INTEGRALISMO", WHICH TENDED TO SEE EVERY PROBLEM IN TERMS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH ORIENTATION OF THE PARTY, WILL HAVE TO BE QUESTIONED. THE DECISION TO CHALLENGE THE DIVORCE LAW WAS AN ENORMOUS MISCALCULATION OF THE MOOD OF THE ELECTORATE, AND A REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE THE MOVEMENT

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OF THE VOTERS OVER THE YEARS AWAY FROM CONSERVATISM- CHURCH OR LEFT- AND TOWARD THE CONCEPTS OF A PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

4. THE PRESSURE FOR CHANGE, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL REFORMS, INCLUDING PUBLIC HEALTH, THE UNIVERSITIES, PUBLIC HOUSING, ETC., WILL BE AUGMENTED BOTH AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL AND WITHIN THE LEFT-WING PARTIES. THE LEFT WILL BE EAGER TO EXPLOIT THESE PUBLIC PRESSURES, WHICH CAN BE EXPLOITED TO SUPPORT THE

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES OF THE LEFT-WING LAY PARTIES. IN THE LONG TERM THIS WILL MEAN THAT THE DC WILL HAVE TO INITIATE IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE MATTERS ON WHICH, WILLY-NILLY, THEY WILL FIND THEMSELVES JOINED BY ALL OF THE LAY PARTIES OF THE LEFT INCLUDING THE COMMUNIST PCI. FOR THIS REASON, BERLINGUER (PCI) CAN LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH CALM CONFIDENCE. THE REFERENDUM HAS GIVEN HIM NOT ONLY AN IMMEDIATE PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST, BUT WITHIN THE PCI WILL VINDICATE THE TIMING OF BERLINGUER'S OFFER LAST FALL OF AN "HISTORIC COMPROMISE" WITH THE DC. IT WILL ALSO GIVE BERLINGUER A LONGER TERM OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE THE PCI'S DESIRED AND CAREFULLY CULTIVATED IMAGE AS A RESPONSIBLE AND RELIABLE ITALIAN POLITICAL FORCE. THE LEFT-WING OF THE DC WILL FEEL THEIR OWN RESERVATIONS ON THE DIVORCE ISSUE TO HAVE BEEN PROVEN CORRECT ALSO, AND THEY WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO PUSH EVEN HARDER FOR A SHIFT, AS THEY SEE IT, FROM CLERICAL "INTEGRALISMO" TO MODERN, PROGRESSIVE, AND INEVITABLY MORE LEFTWARD-ORIENTED POLICIES THAN THE CONSERVATIVE DCS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT IN THE PAST.

5. THE INTENTIONS OF THE COALITION PARTIES TO CONDUCT BUSINESS AS USUAL ARE ENCOURAGING, IN VIEW OF THE CURRENT PRESSING DEMANDS ON THE GOVERNMENT, DESPITE THE LONG TERM INADEQUACY OF A "BUSINESS AS USUAL" ATTITUDE. FOR THE MOMENT THE COALITION PARTIES (DC, PSI, PSDI, PRI) AND EVEN THE LEFT OPPOSITION PCI ARE NOT DISPOSED TO ROCK THE BOAT. THERE IS NO WORKABLE ALTERNATIVE MAJORITY WHICH COULD REPLACE THE PRESENT CENTER-LEFT FORMULA IN THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT, AND NO ITALIAN PARTY (WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE FASCIST MSI) WISHES TO PULL THE GOI DOWN.

6. THE REFERENDUM RESULT WILL NEVERTHELESS IMPINGE UPON THE DESIRE TO DO BUSINESS AS USUAL. THE PSI AND ITS LAY COALITION PARTNERS WILL BE VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE "PROGRESSIVE" IMPLICATIONS OF THE REFERENDUM VOTE AND THEY WILL PRESS FOR  
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MORE VIGOROUS ACTIONS ON REFORMS. AT THE SAME TIME THEIR RESISTANCE TO CLASSIC REMEDIES FOR ITALY'S INFLATIONARY PROBLEM IS LIKELY TO BE STRENGTHENED. SEEN IN THIS LIGHT, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE REFERENDUM EXPERIENCE WILL NOT IMPROVE INTRA-COALITION HARMONY. EVENTS WILL QUICKLY DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THE INTRA-COALITION ATMOSPHERE WILL WORSEN. WE CANNOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT PRESSURES WITHIN THE DC, OR PRESSURES ON THE DC FROM THE PSI, TOGETHER WITH THE EXISTING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES FACING THE COUNTRY, COULD PUT THE FIFTH RUMOR GOVERNMENT IN EARLY TROUBLE.

7. THE ABOVE NOTWITHSTANDING, MY SOURCES IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, AS WELL AS THE CONTACTS OF MY STAFF, ARE QUITE CLEAR THAT SINCERE EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO PRESERVE NOT ONLY THIS GOVERNING FORMULA, BUT THIS FIFTH RUMOR GOVERNMENT,

IN THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE IS NO BETTER ALTERNATIVE, AND  
IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT DESPITE THE REFUSAL OF THE ELECTORATE TO  
FOLLOW THEIR TRADITIONAL PARTY PATTERNS THERE WERE NO SEATS IN  
PARLIAMENT WON OR LOST IN THIS REFERENDUM. MOREOVER, THERE IS  
NO REPEAT NO EVIDENCE ON WHICH TO BASE ANY ASSUMPTION OF ANY  
SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN PARTY LOYALTIES AS A RESULT OF THIS TEST.  
WHAT THE REFERENDUM HAS DONE IS TO REVEAL THE ITALIAN ELECTORATE  
IN A NEW LIGHT? WHICH THE POLITICAL CLASS MUST NOW REEVALUATE IN  
ORDER TO FORM THE APPROPRIATE CONCLUSIONS. IT IS BOTH A  
CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DEMOCRATIC ITALIAN PARTIES.  
WE WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY BOTH THE MANNER AND THE DEGREE TO  
WHICH THEY ARE ABLE TO RESPOND. VOLPE UNQTE VOLPE

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